

FAQ's about the Garrett Park Community Center Transfer

Provided by the Garrett Park Nursery School

Why should the Town acquire the Community Center building?

It is in the Town's best interest to acquire the Community Center (also known as the Garrett Park Estates Activity Building) and playground from its current owner, the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission. **The residents of Garrett Park literally built the Community Center in the late 1940s and early 1950s.** Over the years, it has been a real center for fostering community – housing the old Town Library, the Nursery School since 1953, and numerous Girl Scout and Cub Scout meetings over the years. **The building has the potential to be a wonderful spot for before and after school care programs or summer camps for young children.** Finally, the playground attached to the Center is the only one available on the south side of Garrett Park suitable for very young children. **Given that the Nursery School is proposing to make acquiring the building budget-neutral for the Town, these benefits come at no cost to its residents.**

How is the transfer of the Community Center to Garrett Park possible?

In July 2009, the Park and Planning Commission voted to transfer the Community Center building and accompanying land to the Town of Garrett Park at no cost to the Town.

Moreover, there is no longer any "land swap" requirement. However, the Planning Commission wants certain restrictions in the deed, including a restriction that the building and accompanying land must continue to be used for recreational and public purposes. Moreover, it requires a "right of reverter." The Town is in discussions with the Planning Commission to work out the details of a deed.

What is the condition of the building?

In April 2008, the County Department of Parks conducted a detailed structural and safety assessment and determined that the building is structurally sound despite needing some significant repairs (e.g., roof, drainage, windows, etc.). In August 2009, the Town obtained an independent assessment of the building that highlighted the need to make the building handicapped accessible.

Would ownership of the building create financial risk to the Town?

No. The Nursery School has offered, in exchange for a no or low rent lease, to take **complete financial responsibility** for the building, including all operational expenses and capital improvements. The building would be available free of charge for official Town events and for other community activities for a reasonable fee. In the highly unlikely event that the Nursery School defaults on its financial responsibilities, the Town would have the option of keeping the property, offering it to the Planning Commission or otherwise disposing of it.

What is the estimated cost of repairing the building?

We estimate the cost of the immediately necessary structural repairs to be about \$300,000 (primarily the cost of replacing the roof and windows, drainage improvements to the site

and improving handicap accessibility to the building). Donations of labor (both skilled and unskilled) and materials will bring down the cash costs.

Will the Nursery School be able to pay for the capital improvements?

Yes. The Nursery School has been a financially viable non-profit business for well over 50 years. It has a proven track record of successful fundraising, and a wide base of support among its alumni and the local community. We intend to cover the costs of the repairs and renovations through a combination of our cash reserves, grant money, loans and donations of labor, money, and materials. **We have over \$50,000 available for the project right now.** We are in the process of seeking a state grant to help cover the costs and we have received positive feedback from organizations such as, the DC Building & Construction Trades Council and Rebuilding Together Montgomery, to our requests for donations of supplies and skilled labor.

Will the Nursery School be able to pay for its operational expenses?

Absolutely. The Nursery School will apply the funds it currently pays to rent the building (in excess of \$14,000 per year) to cover the cost of operating the building (about \$12,000 per year).

Is there any Town precedent for an arrangement like this?

Yes – the Town’s arrangement with the Garrett Park Swimming Pool Association. The GPSPA has an exclusive low rent ground lease to use Town land to operate the Pool. It is financially responsible for maintaining its structures, grounds, and paying for its utilities, etc. Town residents have a preference with respect to joining the pool, just as residents have a preference for admission to the Nursery School.

What about the Town’s liability for children who attend the school?

The Nursery School carries liability insurance and must meet strict state licensing requirements. The liability to the Town would be the same as on other Town property, such as the Pool.

Next Steps for the Town?

The first step is the Town Council must vote to accept the transfer of the property. We anticipate it will follow the same procedure it followed when the Town Council voted to accept Laetitia Yeandle’s donation of property to the Town to be used as a playground and sanctuary. The second step is for the Town to negotiate and enter into a lease with the Nursery School.

Want to learn more?

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